

Message Text

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PAGE 01 NEW DE 06296 01 OF 02 021854Z
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EUR-12 EA-07 IO-13 CIAE-00 DODE-00
PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01
PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 AID-05 OMB-01 TRSE-00
PC-01 /095 W
-----021859Z 096905 /41

R 021324Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3107
INFO AMCONSUL BOMBAY
AMCONSUL CALCUTTA
AMCONSUL MADRAS
AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
AMEMBASSY DACCA
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU
AMEMBASSY KABUL
USCINCPAC

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 1 OF 2 NEW DELHI 6296

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

EO 11652: NA
TAGS: PINT, PGOV, IN
SUBJ: CFD TO MERGE INTO NEWLY-INAUGURATED JANATA PARTY

REF: NEW DELHI 6202

SUMMARY: THE JANATA PARTY WAS FORMALLY PROCLAIMED ON
MAY 1 AT A HUGE INAUGURAL CONVENTION IN DELHI. REBEL
CONGRESSMAN CHANDRA SHEKHAR WAS SELECTED AS PARTY
PRESIDENT. THE MAJOR SURPRISE OF THE CONVENTION WAS
JAGJIVAN RAM'S ANNOUNCEMENT THAT THE CFD WILL MERGE INTO
THE JANATA WITH IMMEDIATE EFFECT. THE CFD HAD SOUGHT TO
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ATTRACT DEFECTING CONGRESSMEN BY RETAINING ITS SEPARATE
IDENTITY AND THUS DEVELOP INTO A POTENTIALLY POWERFUL
THIRD FORCE. HOWEVER, THIS STRATEGY RECEIVED A SET-
BACK WHEN THE JANATA DECIDED TO WELCOME DEFECTIONS FROM
THE CONGRESS. IN ADDITION, POPULAR PRESSURE AND PLEAS
FROM J.P. NARAYAN TO SURRENDER ITS SEPARATE IDENTITY HAD
BEEN BUILDING ON THE CFD LEADERSHIP. THE DECIDING FACTOR

IN THE MERGER DECISION, HOWEVER, MAY HAVE BEEN THE CFD'S REALIZATION THAT IT WOULD BE IN A POOR POSITION TO BARGAIN FOR TICKETS IN THE UPCOMING STATE ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS. WHATEVER BARGAINING NOW OCCURS IS LIKELY TO TAKE PLACE "IN HOUSE" RATHER THAN BETWEEN TWO DISTINCT POLITICAL PARTIES. END SUMMARY.

1. PRIME MINISTER DESAI SPRUNG A MAJOR SURPRISE ON THE 25,000 DELEGATES ATTENDING THE JANATA PARTY'S INAUGURAL CONVENTION IN DELHI MAY 1 WITH THE ANNOUNCEMENT THAT THE CFD WILL MERGE INTO THE JANATA WITH IMMEDIATE EFFECT. CFD CHAIRMAN JAGJIVAN RAM APPEARED SHORTLY THEREAFTER TO CONFIRM DESAI'S ANNOUNCEMENT AMID TUMULTUOUS CHEERS FROM THE FLOOR. RAM SAID THAT THE CFD NATIONAL EXECUTIVE WILL MEET MAY 5 TO FORMALLY RATIFY THE DECISION. ON APRIL 30, THE FOUR COMPONENTS OF THE JANATA RESOLVED AT THEIR RESPECTIVE CONVENTIONS TO DISSOLVE THEIR IDENTITIES. AT THE MAY 1 MEETING, DELEGATES FROM THE FOUR PARTIES LOUDLY APPROVED DESAI'S RESOLUTION FORMALLY PROCLAIMING THE BIRTH OF THE JANATA PARTY. LATER IN THE DAY, CONGRESS (R) REBEL CHANDRA SHEKHAR WAS SELECTED AS PRESIDENT OF THE PARTY. THE 40-MEMBER WORKING COMMITTEE, COMPRISING TEN REPRESENTATIVES FROM EACH OF THE COMPONENT PARTIES, WILL BE ELECTED SHORTLY.

2. RAM TOLD THE JANATA CONVENTION THAT THE CFD NATIONAL EXECUTIVE HAD BEEN SCHEDULED TO MEET ON MAY 7 TO DECIDE THE MERGER QUESTION. HOWEVER, HE EXPLAINED THAT THE ACTING PRESIDENT'S ATTEMPT TO BLOCK THE DISSOLUTION LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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OF NINE STATE ASSEMBLIES (SEPTEL) FORCED HIM TO RETHINK THE ISSUE AND LED HIM TO CONCLUDE THAT MERGER WITH THE JANATA WAS THE ONLY CORRECT COURSE OF ACTION. THE DELEGATES GREETED RAM'S EXPLANATION WITH LAUGHTER, PROBABLY A REFLECTION OF THE HARD FACT THAT THE CFD HAD BEEN BOXED INTO A CORNER AND HAD LITTLE ALTERNATIVE OTHER THAN TO MERGE.

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AMEMBASSY KABUL

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

3. THE CFD HAD COME UNDER INTENSE PRESSURE IN RECENT WEEKS FROM ASSORTED JANATA MP'S AS WELL AS FROM J.P. NARAYAN TO GIVE UP ITS SEPARATE IDENTITY AND MERGE WITH THE JANATA. A PUBLIC OPINION POLL PUBLISHED IN THE APRIL 29 "INDIAN EXPRESS" INDICATED THAT 99 PER CENT OF THE RESPONDENTS FAVORED CFD'S MERGER. ACCORDING TO SOME OF OUR SOURCES, RAM AND BAHUGUNA HOPED THAT THE CFD WOULD ATTRACT LARGE NUMBERS OF DEFECTING CONGRESSMEN BY REMAINING A DISTINCT PARTY AND THAT IT COULD EVENTUALLY BECOME A POWERFUL THIRD FORCE. THIS APPARENT STRATEGY RECEIVED A MAJOR SETBACK ON APRIL 24 WHEN THE JANATA LEADERSHIP REVERSED ITS EARLIER STANCE AND DECIDED ON AN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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"OPEN DOOR" POLICY OF ACCEPTING DEFECTING CONGRESS MEMBERS OF THE RAJYA SABHA AND STATE ASSEMBLIES. ALTHOUGH PRIMARILY AIMED AT ENCOURAGING DEFECTIONS IN PARLIAMENT'S UPPER HOUSE, THIS NEW POLICY MAY ALSO HAVE BEEN DESIGNED TO DEFLECT POTENTIAL DEFECTORS AWAY FROM THE CFD AND TOWARD THE JANATA. IN ADDITION, WITH STATE ELECTIONS IMMINENT, RAM AND BWHUGUNA MAY HAVE REALIZED THAT THEY WERE IN A WEAK POSITION TO DEMAND THE CFD'S SHARE OF ASSEMBLY TICKETS. PROBABLY EXAGGERATING HIS POINT, A JANATA MP HAS TOLD US THAT HAD THE CFD REMAINED APART, THE JANATA WOULD HAVE REFUSED TO

ALLOCAE ANY TICKETS AT ALL TO CFD CANDIDATES. HENCE, THE CFD LEADERSHIP, PERHAPS RECOGNIZING THAT THE PARTY'S CONTINUED SEPARATE EXISTENCE COULD HAVE LED TO ITS INCREASING ISOLATION FROM THE JANATA AND ITS ALIENATION FROM THE PEOPLE, EVENTUALLY OPTED FOR MERGER INTO THE LARGER PARTY.

4. THE CFD'S DECISION FOR MERGER APPEARS TO HAVE RESOLVED A POTENTIAL SOURCE OF ACRIMONY BETWEEN THE TWO PARTIES DURING THE DISTRIBUTION OF TICKETS FOR THE STATE ASSEMBLY RACES. SOME OBSERVERS HAD FEARED THAT THE BARGAINING OVER HANDING OUT MLA NOMINATIONS, PARTICULARLY IN SUCH STATES AS U.P. WHERE BOTH PARTIES HAVE ACKNOWLEDGED STRENGTH, COULD HAVE ENDANGERED THE RULING FRONT IN THE CENTER. THE DECISION FOR MERGER NOW SEEMS TO INDICATE THAT WHATEVER BARGAINING TAKES PLACE WILL OCCUR "IN HOUSE" RATHER THAN BETWEEN TWO DISTINCT POLITICAL PARTIES. IT ALSO APPEARS TO PAVE THE WAY FOR THE EXPANSION OF MORARJI DESAI'S CABINET. A JANATA MP, WHO IS HIMSELF UNDER CONSIDERATION FOR A MINISTERIAL POST, TOLD US TODAY THAT THE LIST OF NEW JUNIOR MINISTERS MAY BE RELEASED BY THE END OF THE WEEK.

5. 49-YEAR OLD CHANDRA SHEKHAR WAS SELECTED AS JANATA PRESIDENT BY CONSENSUS. AS A REBEL CONGRESSMAN WHO LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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HAD ADVOCATED A DIALOGUE BETWEEN J.P. NARAYAN AND MRS. GANDHI IN 1974, HE FELL OUT OF THE FORMER PM'S FAVOR AND WAS DETAINED DURING THE EMERGENCY. WITH HIS RECORD OF OPPOSITION TO THE PREVIOUS REGIME AND THE FACT THAT HE BELONGED TO NONE OF THE FOUR PARTIES THAT MERGED TO FORM THE JANATA, CHANDRA SHEKHAR WAS PROBABLY VIEWED AS THE MOST DESIRABLE CANDIDATE FOR THE JOB. THE SELECTION OF A LEADER OF ONE OF THE COMPONENT PARTIES COULD HAVE AROUSED SUSPICIONS AND RESENTMENT AMONG THE CADRE OF THE OTHER THREE. SCHNEIDER

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Message Attributes

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